PHILIP MORRIS INTERNATIONAL
ISSUES BRIEF

Issue:

Environmental tobacco smoke (ETS.)

Executive Summary:

- The claim that ETS exposure is associated with an increased risk of disease in non-smokers is not conclusively supported by scientific data.

- All epidemiologic studies conducted in the United States have failed to report a statistically significant correlation between spousal smoking and lung cancer in non-smokers. The few studies reporting a significant association were conducted abroad and failed to take account of environmental and life-style factors that may have a bearing on such associations.

- Only one of 11 studies has reported a statistically significant correlation between ETS and lung cancer in the workplace, and that study was based on a small number of subjects.

- Although some people may be annoyed by wisps of tobacco smoke in the air, actual exposures in typical public places are minimal. A study by researchers at the Harvard University School of Public Health determined that a non-smoker would have to spend 100 hours in the smokiest environment to be exposed to the nicotine equivalent of one cigarette.

- Disagreements between smokers and non-smokers are best dealt with through courtesy and accommodation, not smoking bans. Designated smoking and non-smoking areas are a sensible alternative to smoking bans.

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Background:

Environmental tobacco smoke became an issue in the 1980's when claims were made that tobacco smoke in the air poses an increased risk of disease for nonsmokers. As a result, there have been numerous calls for smoking bans in the workplace, in restaurants and in other public areas frequented by smokers and non-smokers.

Philip Morris opposes total smoking bans and other excessive restrictions on smokers. We also recognize that tobacco smoke may be an annoyance to some non-smokers. We believe, however, it is possible to respect the preferences of both smokers and non-smokers through courtesy and accommodation. Where desirable, the various preferences of smokers and non-smokers can be accommodated through designated smoking and no-smoking areas; total smoking bans are unnecessary.

The most recent government pronouncements on ETS come from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA,) which in 1990 issued a "draft risk assessment" alleging that ETS exposure increases the risk of lung cancer in non-smokers. The EPA took the extraordinary step of leaking its draft report before it had been subjected to independent scientific review, and issuing draft "guidelines" recommending severe workplace smoking restrictions.

The draft risk assessment claims that ETS carries a relative risk for lung cancer in non-smokers of 1.28 (a relative risk of "1" means no risk). To put this in perspective, the relative risk of developing lung cancer from drinking green tea has been reported in a single study as 2.7, and the relative lung cancer risk from keeping birds as pets is 6. Epidemiologists consider relative risks of less than 2 to be "weak" and caution against jumping to conclusions on the basis of weak associations.

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The EPA draft report provides a case study of how a government agency with a social agenda can select the scientific evidence which suits its purposes. The Agency considered 24 studies regarding spousal smoking and lung cancer. Nineteen of these studies reported no statistically significant correlation between ETS and lung cancer. (A study is said to be "statistically non-significant" if its results could have been obtained by chance.) The largest study in the U.S. considered by the Agency, a dissertation by Dr. Luis

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Varela and later in a published article by Dr. Dwight Janerich *et al.* of Yale University, reported no significant correlation between ETS and lung cancer in the workplace or among the spouses of smokers. The other U.S. studies, many of them financed by the federal government, also reported statistically non-significant results.

The five studies reporting significant associations between ETS and lung cancer were conducted abroad, principally in Asia. Several studies were performed on relatively small population samples (one of them on as few as six subjects) and did not take account of cultural and life-style differences. The largest such study -- termed its "flagship study" by the EPA -- was conducted in Japan where charcoal stoves, reported to be associated with a high incidence of lung cancer, are widely used for cooking. When the Japanese researcher was asked to provide the raw data used in his study, he refused, claiming that they had inadvertently been destroyed.

Subsequent to the EPA draft report, three additional Asian studies have been released, one of them the largest study ever conducted on ETS. Unlike the Japanese study, all three took account of at least one environmental and life-style factor and all three reported negative associations. One of them was co-authored by Dr. William Blot, a member of the EPA's own panel of scientific experts. If the conclusions of these new studies were included in the EPA's relative risk calculations, the relative risk of exposure to ETS would drop even further, from 1.28 to 1.08.

Conclusion:

Taken as a whole, the scientific studies concerning the possible association between ETS and chronic disease in non-smokers are inconclusive and inconsistent, and therefore should not be used as a basis for public policy. Anti-smoking lobbyists, and the government agencies which heed them, are consulting, not the scientific evidence, but their own political agendas when they call for excessive restrictions on smokers.

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